Research on tear-free onion

788. SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of any research going on to produce tear-free onions;

(b) whether any such research in countries like Japan and New Zealand has been successful;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether any research in this matter is going on in the country; and

(e) the impact of any success in the research in the matter, over the market of onions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Government is aware about the research being done to produce tear free onions. A collaborative research with the cooperation of Japan and New Zealand is being done to produce "tear-free onion".

(c) To develop tear-free onions, a gene-silencing technology, called RANi is used, which can shut down the lachrymatory factor synthase gene in onion responsible for tears.

(d) No research to produce "tear-free onion" has been initiated in the country.

(e) As the work is in the developmental stage, study of market potential does not arise.

Plan for development of agriculture

†789. SHRI AJAY SINGH CHAUTALA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that profession of agriculture has become non-profitale as a result of decline in its production in the country;

(b) whether Government has taken any measures to impove the present condition of agriculture; and

(c) if not, whether Government would formulate any effective plan for the development of agriculture by setting a target to increase the rate of production of agricultural products?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) Agriculture contributes nearly 18% of India's GDP with about 60% of the country's population dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. The progress in agriculture has enable the country to achieve food security. The foodgrains production was a record 217.28 million tonnes during the year 2006-07. There has been similar increase in the production of non-foodgrain crops as well as horticulture and plantation crops. However, the agricultural growth during the Ninth Plan and first three years of the Tenth Plan was below the targeted growth of 4% per annum, due to various factors and constraints, which adeversely affected the economic viability of farming. However, the agriculture sector has shown positive signs of revival during last two years of Tenth Plan.

Based on the Revised Draft National Policy for Farmers submitted by the National Commission on Farmers, Government of India has approved the National Policy for Farmers 2007. Various recomendations made by the Commission for rejuvenation of agriculture and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.